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Valuable Information About Your Windows

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One of the most common myths in the window industry is that changes, such as completely new windows or new storms, will prevent the windows from experiencing problems with condensation. This is very simply not true. Many of the major window makers have been blamed for sweating windows or moisture between the storms and the prime windows. In order to dispel the myth that these people are somehow to blame, there is some very important information that must be brought to light.

Let us suppose that you have a typical home with older, weighted double hung windows. These windows do nothing but heat up the neighborhood with your BTU's and dollars. Considering your past heating bills, you may decide that now is the time to do something about this. You could put on the old wood storm window again, which may mean possible repainting of the sash and repainting. Then to give the window a fighting chance, you may further go on to cover either the inside or the outside of the window with plastic. This tends to double the work and looks unsightly; plus due to the obscure or uneven light transfer through the plastic, you may get that uncomfortable feeling of living in a fish bowl.

Your next option may be to invest in new storm windows, possibly aluminum or vinyl multiple track units. If you do so, you will start to notice that the new units are fogging up or experiencing condensation problems. You may get a bit angry by this, since this probably never happened with your old, wooden window. The reason behind this action, however, may offer some insight as to the true source of your window problem. If your new storm window condenses on the inside, this may show that the prime window leaks like a sieve towards the outside. Now that the new storm unit is installed and properly sealed to the frame, it prevents all of that warm, moist air from escaping, which is what your prime window is supposed to do. This escaping warm, moist air hits the colder, outer storm pane and results in the fogging or condensation which you now see. Again, the storm window is acting in the role that your prime window is supposed to be playing.

Since you still want to see out of your window, you'll probably decide to check out the next option, which is to eliminate the weights and install aluminum or vinyl spring loaded side balances. These are a help if installed properly.

Proper installation should involve removal of the prime sash and taking out the weights and pulleys. The new cavities should then be insulated before the new balances and sash are put into place. As a result, you will now have a much tighter window, using the same sash, new balances, and a new storm window. Yet, a draft is still felt and there still may be a bit of fogging which could indicate an air leak.

You must understand that double hung windows need room to operate or slide. Your old sash was plowed out for the rope and pulley system, which may be the cause of this minor leakage.

Your next option would be to invest in a tighter, more efficient type of window. This may be a "replacement window". Replacement windows come in either vinyl, aluminum, or wood; in either a single or multiple glazing (with either half or full screens), which eliminate the need for storms. They are custom fabricated to fit each opening and are mounting in the original, existing frame. Learning from the last option, you know that you must properly insulate the weight cavities and that after the new unit is in place, you must insulate the areas between the old frame and the new one. You replace your nicely varnished stops and look at your accomplishment. Just great! You have a beautifully varnished frame, with either a white, tan, dark brown, or simulated wood grain vinyl or aluminum sash. You feel that you can live with this - provided it works. Unfortunately, you may now find that the inside of your new replacement window is sweating and fogging up. This again proves that the old window did leak, but also that your new window is doing its job. Even if you want a totally new window, the results could be the same. So what can be done? Other facts need to be addressed.

In almost all cases, the result of continuing condensation proved your energy efforts were on the right track. Whatever step you chose made the window opening tighter and more efficient. The continuing condensation, however, shows that you did not consider all the sources of the moisture which caused the condensation. The moisture, in fact, was probably always there. It may simply be that your old, worn out window leaked so badly that the moisture generated from your lifestyle just "went out the window", so to speak. This moisture and resulting condensation on the windows may be the excessive water vapor/humidity created, then trapped, in your home through normal processes. This moisture can come from many sources, such as normal respiration, cooking, cleaning, plants, poor structural insulation, or lack of correct ventilation.

At the Around Your House website (<http://www.aroundyourhouse.net>) in both the 'Moisture & Condensation' and 'Article & Information Archive' sections, there are two articles, "Condensation and Humidity- A Year-Round Problem", and "A Cold Roof- Good Health For Your Home", which are good sources of information regarding the condensation problem showing up on your windows and how to deal with it. Other sources of information and help can be the window makers themselves. Most quality manufacturers want you to clearly understand the problem and how to combat it. The Pella Window Company has a good brochure entitled, "Condensation: Dispelling the Fog". The Andersen Window Company has its own booklet, "Condensation Answers From Andersen". Hurd, Marvin, and Kolbe & Kolbe also have information. These booklets and brochures are usually free for the asking and may just clear the fog for you. Another good source of information which delves deeper into the problem is "Moisture Problems In The Home", which is being offered free of charge as a public service of Handyman Services (contact us using any of the methods listed at the footer of this page to obtain a copy). The information within was researched by the University of Wisconsin, and should be very helpful in understanding the moisture problems which you may be experiencing. It's sort of like the old saying, "If all else fails, read the instruction." In this case, after getting all of the valuable advice from your barber, butcher, and barkeep, it may be high time that you looked to more knowledgeable sources and get the free materials from the professionals.

With the ever-changing factors in our environment, moisture and the problems it can create are a constant study. There is no one real answer to solve all of the issues. But keep in mind that how you proceed may determine not only your home's structural health, but that of you and your family as well. So before you invest in any window conservation efforts, get the facts. Ask questions. Be prepared to

learn things that you didn't know, understand, or really want to accept. Knowledge is a precious form of wealth in disguise.

We hope this information has been helpful to you! If you have any further questions, please visit our website at www.aroundyourhouse.net, or contact Jim at Around Your House.

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